

Senate Banking Committee member joined him in rejecting a different sanctions package in 2008.

Simply put, Senator Hagel has no credibility on perhaps the biggest foreign policy challenge facing the Obama administration's second term and on American national security interests in the Middle East and around the world.

Consider how his nomination was interpreted by Iranian journalists and government officials. Press TV, a Tehran-based propaganda network, noted with satisfaction that Senator Hagel is known for "his criticism of Washington's anti-Iran policies" and "has consistently opposed any plan to launch [a] military strike against Iran."

The point is, not that we should be threatening military strikes against Iran, but to take this off the table entirely completely undercuts any diplomatic efforts we might take to deny Iran a nuclear weapon.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry responded to the Hagel announcement by declaring:

We hope that practical changes will be created in the U.S. foreign policy and . . . that the U.S. officials will favor peace instead of warmongering.

The Iranians are claiming we are the ones warmongering, while they are building a nuclear weapon.

Just for good measure, the Al Jazeera Web site published an article headlined: "Obama defeats the Israel Lobby." Is this really the impression we want to give our adversaries and our allies in the Middle East? Is this how we encourage our friends, to say we will be there to support our allies? Is this the message we want to convey to our adversaries such as Iran, that has threatened the annihilation of Israel, to wipe it off the map? Unfortunately, that is the message that is conveyed by the nomination of Senator Hagel as Secretary of Defense.

Not only has Senator Hagel been a persistent critic of Iran sanctions, he has also displayed a stubborn hostility toward America's closest Middle Eastern ally.

In October 2000, shortly after Yasser Arafat launched the second Intifada, 96 Senators signed a letter to President Clinton affirming their solidarity with Israel. Senator Hagel was not among them. Six months later, after a relentless onslaught of Palestinian terrorism, 87 Senators signed a different letter asking President Bush to "initiate a reassessment of our relations with the Palestinians." Once again, Senator Hagel refused to sign. He also refused to join 89 other Senators in signing a November 2001 letter that urged President Bush to maintain strong support for Israel and to continue snubbing Arafat until the Palestinian leader ended his terror campaign.

On April 12, 2002, a Palestinian suicide bomber killed 6 people and injured more than 100 others in Jerusalem.

That same day, Senator Hagel went to the Senate floor and suggested a moral equivalence between Palestinian terrorism and Israeli self-defense.

Three months later, he published an article in the Washington Post bemoaning "the endless cycle of violence" and declaring that "Israel must take steps to show its commitment to peace."

In a 2003 interview with a local newspaper in Lincoln, NE, Senator Hagel ratcheted up his rhetoric even further, saying the Israelis "keep Palestinians caged up like animals."

In 2009, Senator Hagel coauthored a policy paper that advised President Obama to pursue a dialog with Hamas—again, a State Department-designated terrorist organization; Iran's primary proxy in the area. More specifically, the paper recommended that Washington "offer [Hamas] inducements that will enable its more moderate elements to prevail, and cease discouraging third parties from engaging with Hamas in ways that might help clarify the movement's views and test its behavior."

Most of us believe, including the U.S. State Department, that Hamas' views and behavior are already clear enough: It is committed to the annihilation of Israel; it fires rockets and Iranian-made missiles at civilian areas; and it indoctrinates Palestinian children in a culture of hatred and violence.

Of course, Senator Hagel's most famous comments—or I should say infamous comments—on Israel were delivered during a 2006 interview with former Clinton administration official Aaron David Miller. In that interview, Senator Hagel said "the Jewish lobby intimidates a lot of people up here." These remarks are deeply offensive, but they are also quite revealing, for they confirm that he simply does not understand the true basis of the U.S.-Israeli alliance.

The American people and their elected representatives support Israel for obvious reasons: Both of our countries are pluralistic democracies with a shared commitment to liberty, equality, and basic human rights; both of our countries are threatened by radical Islam; and both of our countries have responded to that threat while remaining free and open societies.

In other words, we have an alliance based on shared values and a common determination to defend liberal democracy against terrorists and dictators alike.

I realize Senator Hagel is now repudiating many of his past actions and statements, but we have seen this before, unfortunately: individuals approaching the confirmation process undergoing a seeming transformation. But this sudden and convenient transformation beggars belief. Senator Hagel has not undergone an abrupt ideological makeover; he just wants to win approval from Members of this Chamber in what we might call a "confirmation conversion."

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HOEVEN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. HOEVEN. I ask unanimous consent that the period of morning business be extended until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise today to advocate for a secure energy future for our Nation. There is no question that we can achieve energy security or energy independence for our country, and I believe we can do it within the next 5 years.

I define energy security or energy independence as producing more energy than we consume. I mean, this is an interrelated, high-tech global economy. Energy will move back and forth between nations, but we truly become energy secure when we produce more energy than we consume. But to do that, to achieve energy independence or energy security, we must take the commonsense steps necessary to achieve it. That is why today, once again, I call on President Obama to approve the Keystone XL Pipeline project now that Governor Heineman of Nebraska has approved the new route through his State of Nebraska.

The Keystone XL Pipeline is not just about bringing Canadian oil to U.S. refineries, it is also vital to move our own U.S.-produced oil through our refineries. In fact, that is how I got involved with this project in the first place.

Although it is hard to believe, TransCanada first applied for approval of this project 4½ years ago. Let me repeat that—4½ years ago. At that time, I was Governor of North Dakota, and I was working with Governor Brian Schweitzer, of Montana, to make sure that oil producers in the Bakken regions of our States, in North Dakota and Montana, could put light sweet crude oil from the Bakken into the Keystone XL Pipeline. We met with TransCanada, contacted our oil producers, met with TransCanada, and they agreed. TransCanada agreed to an on-ramp so that the Keystone XL Pipeline would move North Dakota and Montana light sweet crude from the Bakken to refineries throughout the United States—to refineries in Illinois, Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana, hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil from our oilfields from day one.